

Howard Gerken who is the General Manager and groundskeeper of River SC, (in addition to currently being the Assistant Coach of Indian River HS girls & boys soccer teams), was recently awarded

**The Delaware High School ~ Soccer Coaches Association Special
Recognition Award recipient for 2007.**

This award acknowledges one individual in the State for their dedication
and accomplishments with the game of soccer.

We are so proud!!

SOCCER BIO OF HOWARD GERKEN

- Played Varsity Soccer at Gettysburg College 1960-64
- Soccer Coach at Oak Grove Jr. High School in Wilmington..... 1968-69
- Soccer Coach at Christiana High School, Newark 1970-74
- Soccer Coach of the Year, State of Delaware 1973
- Led Christiana High School to Delaware State Championship..... 1973
- Inductee into the DYSA Hall of Fame..... 2002
- DHSSCA Special Recognition Award. 2007
- Numerous Division & Conference Championships

1979

Started the Indian River School District Saturday morning recreation program in the fall of 1979 at Sussex Central High School while an administrator there. This program was relocated to Indian River High School in the fall of 1984 when he moved to Selbyville Middle School as the Principal. This program has grown to over 325 children (per session) in grades K-7. This program operates both spring & fall

1983

Started the Middle School soccer program in 1983 at Selbyville Middle School with George Reddish as coach.

1986

Instrumental in starting the Indian River High School soccer program in 1986, with Richard Goodman as head coach. The team played a JV schedule for one year, and then began a varsity schedule. He served 5 years as head coach, and is still serving as the assistant.

1989

Started the Indian River High School Booster Club in the fall of 1989 to help support the IR High School and SMS teams.

1987

Began the Indian River Youth Indoor Program in 1987, still operating at Southern Delaware School of the Arts (former Indian River High School).

1994

Started the "River" Soccer Camp for Youth in the summer of 1994. This camp has expanded to include an evening "Kinder Camp." This year the camps enrollment was 175 players. The IRHS Soccer Booster Club sponsors the camp.

1975-97

Served on the Delaware Secondary School Athletic Association State Soccer Tournament Committee for 21 years, 1975-97.

Served as Chairman of this committee for 20 years.

2002-06

Served as Head Coach for "United," a boys travel team with the River Soccer Club.

1995

One of the founding members of the River Soccer Club, which was formed in 1995. The Club began with 4 teams and approximately 60 players. They currently have approximately 600 players enrolled. With Howard at the helm, the RSC began an ambitious project to construct their own playing fields. He was instrumental in raising \$500,000.00 to build the River Soccer Complex. They currently have 6 irrigated fields (one of which is lighted), a concession stand, and lighted parking area for 250 cars. Among his many other soccer duties, he serves as the Project Manager of this undertaking, overseeing everything from construction of the irrigation systems, to overseeing the daily maintenance.

2002-04

Although retired from the IRSD, Howard stepped back up to the plate when needed to coach the Varsity Boys and Girls soccer teams for Indian River High School. Both teams had winning seasons. He currently serves as the Assistant Coach for both these teams.

2004

In 2004 along with his wife Sandie, they started (and still facilitate) a local chapter of TOPSSoccer. This is a program to introduce the joy of soccer to handicapped and special needs children.

1968 to Present

Member of NCSAA (National Soccer Coaches Association of America)

If that's not enough, he also cuts the grass and lines the fields at both the River Soccer Club and the Indian River High Soccer Stadium!

***Copy of Presentation Speech given by Coach Kilby
at the All-State Banquet***

Everything and everyone has a beginning. There is always a catalyst that ignites that beginning.

Howard Gerken is many, many things. As I corroborated with his wife Sandie in perpetration for this evening, it became apparent to me that most of all he is a catalyst, as I believe you will see. Howard played soccer, at Freehold Regional HS, in NJ. He went on to play at Gettysburg College from 1960-64. Upon graduating he pursued a career in education. He also pursued his passion, soccer. Howard's coaching career began as the coach at Oak Grove Jr. High, Wilmington, in 1968.

He moved on to coach at Christiana HS, from 1970-74. He was selected as the Coach of the Year, in 1973 as his Christiana team won the State Championship that year.

In 1975 Howard took a position as an assistant principal at Sussex Central HS and was instrumental in getting a HS soccer team started there, assuming the role of catalyst. Shortly thereafter he started a Saturday morning recreational youth soccer program at Sussex Central.

In 1984 Howard moved to Selbyville Middle School as principal. Again establishing a Saturday morning rec. program at Selbyville, and additionally he started a Jr. High soccer program at his new school.

Howard was instrumental in starting the IRHS soccer program in 1986. Next he started the IR Soccer Booster Club to help support both the high school and middle school teams. A boosters club that is to this day, supporting our boys and girls soccer programs at both the high school and the middle school.

Always looking to expand soccer in the community, he began a Winter Indoor Soccer Program, in 1987, and then the "River" Soccer Camp for area youth. Programs that are still going strong today.

As the soccer seeds he had planted grew the demand and need for a true Soccer Club arose. Again his role as a catalyst came to the fore front. His guidance coupled with the generosity of the Mais family and the incredible efforts of so many others established the River Soccer Club. Of course, he was the project manager, helping to develop a plan for the complex, overseeing the construction of the fields and clubhouse. He worked to obtain grants and funds.

Today he remains the chief groundskeeper and the director of all three of the River Soccer Club recreational programs.

When a void arose at IRHS for a head coach in both the boys and girls programs, Howard again stepped forward and assumed these roles with great success for four seasons.

In his spare time Howard served on the DASA board, which was the Delaware Secondary School Athletic Association, which was the predecessor to DIAA. He served on the State Soccer Tournament Committee for 21 years. He served as Chairman of this committee for 20 of those years. A factor which came in handy this past season as we went to penalty kicks in the first round of the state tournament. There was some confusion amongst the referees about the procedure to be followed. Howard helped them understand the process, rather succinctly. He explained diplomatically that he was right and they were wrong. After all and I quote "I wrote the damn rule."

In 2006 Howard, along with his wife Sandie, attended USYSA soccer training and developed a TOP Soccer program for children with disabilities, recognizing that his grandson Josh and other children with disabilities needed a program where they could learn and enjoy the game that is Howard's passion.

When our new high school was built Howard helped lead the charge to make the old high school field a soccer only facility. Again his role as a catalyst, Howard makes soccer things happen. We now have our own soccer specific stadium.

Some how through all of this Howard had a family; both of his children Melissa and Greg are educators. Greg is following Howard's legacy, Greg was also a Delaware All State player and, went on to a stellar four year soccer career at West Chester University. Greg is heavily involved in coaching at the Hockessin Soccer Club, Sanford High School and in the ODP program. Greg's sons Jonas and Liam are also headed down their grandfather's soccer path.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that beside Howard through this entire time has been his wife Sandie. A soccer coach's wife has to be someone very special, as they are often called soccer widows. Sandie has certainly made many sacrifices along the way, and to her we are grateful.

Being involved with youth soccer has probably been Howard's true calling. Howard was a teacher and an administrator by vocation. His ability to start programs and get people involved came naturally to him. I would safely estimate that Howard Gerken has touched and influenced thousands of lives. Both the lives parents and their children.

Consider how many families have come together each and every time they have gathered to attend a soccer event he has established, orchestrated and organized through out his 32 years as an educator, a principle, and coach.

I believe Howard has been perhaps the most influential, long term contributor to our sport in the state of Delaware. In 2002 Howard was voted into the Delaware Youth Soccer Association Hall of Fame, an honor richly deserved.

I would ask you now to join me in honoring Howard Gerken for his incredible long term efforts and contributions to soccer in the state of Delaware as The Delaware High School--- Soccer Coaches Association ----Special Recognition Award recipient for 2007.